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ABSTRACT

The financial crunch facing the nation has reduced the scope of educational opportunity and depraciated the quality of education for many White students, but it is the disadvantaged minorities who are the most victimized. Most Black and Hispanic children attend predominantly minority urban schools with disproportionate shares of special needs children. State, local, and Federal support have decreased so markedly, however, that these schools must reduce compensatory programs and services meant to allow disadvantaged children to compete on an equal basis with middle-income children. In higher education, Black enrollment gains are being eroded. The uncertainty of Federal financial aid programs, the raising of admission standards (including a decline in open enrollments), inferior high school educations, reductions in remedial and support services, and the poor state of the economy combine to produce a high attrition rate for Black students and to force an even greater percentage of Black high school graduates not to opt for college. In general, the disadvantaged have not been well served by American public education. However, retrenchments have eroded what gains were made and have been used as justification for de-emphasizing the need for compensatory treatment for those who have not shared sufficiently in public education's progress and achievements over the past 30 years. (CMG)

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WILL RETRENCHMENTS DESTROY EQUAL EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITY?

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WILL RETRENCHMENTS DESTROY EQUAL EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITY?

Few, if any, of the benefits of our democracy accrue to blacks unless a fierce campaign has been waged over a protracted period to secure those rights which most other Americans receive as almost automatic benefits of citizenship in the world's most affluent democracy. Race remains a determining factor in shaping the life chances of black Americans. Regretfully, Gregory S. Kearse is correct: "Race, if anything, becomes an increasing factor in light of this nation's sleepy-eyed awakening to affirmative action and other measures designed to correct past acts of racial discrimination."[1] Black Americans made their greatest advances toward securing the rights of citizenship at a time in the nation's history when the quality of life for white Americans was significantly enhanced. But even in the best of times, white Americans were never enthusiastic about equal access and affirmative action for black Americans. In his insightful commentary on the "highs and lows" of the progress of blacks in America, Alan Pifer declared: "Progress for blacks yes, but also extensive failure measured against the nation's highest ideals and against the national self-interest."[2]

I acknowledge that circumstances for black Americans are not as desperate today as they once were. But there is little cause to celebrate the cessation of many of the more blatant and demeaning discriminatory practices against blacks when the facts reveal "that blacks are still materially much worse off than whites, that racial prejudice and discrimination are still pervasive, and that new, more subtle barriers to further progress are being erected."[3] Resurfacing in a sluggish economy is a strong conservative attitude among many white Americans that communicates a "short-sighted and uncharitable spirit" toward blacks and other disadvantaged minorities. Far too many white Americans believe that black advancement needs no further

compensatory assistance from the courts or governments. There is widespread apprehension among blacks that their hard won gains in equal access and affirmative action will be lost or reduced by an uncaring society caught in the discomfort of an economic recession.

"Hard-times" have befallen education in America. Spiraling inflation, escalating costs of education, the regressive nature of many local and state systems of producing school revenue, a protracted economic recession, and reduced financial-aid assistance to students have imposed severe hardships on the nation's schools, colleges, and universities. The financial exigencies confronting many institutions in elementary, secondary, and higher education are such that massive retrenchments in programs, services, and personnel have been implemented or contemplated. Irwin H. Polishook, president of the Professional Staff Congress of the City University of New York, has had extensive experience with retrenchments. He notes that the impact of retrenchment on institutional policy and development is frequently overlooked or underestimated.[4] Polishook declares:[5]

> Every retrenchment decision has a direct bearing on student access, student retention, the availability of instruction, and ultimately the breadth of curriculum. The effect is partially quantitative--fewer students can be accommodated and a smaller choice of programs can be offered--and it is also qualitative--one program is reduced or eliminated while another is not.

Across the nation, governments and educational institutions have used financial woes as justification for withdrawing the fragile social promises on which prior commitments to equal educational opportunity and affirmative action were based. Affirmative action is among the major casualities of retrenchment. While retrenchment guidelines often contain provision for

concern about affirmative action, members of minority groups who have most recently gained increased entry access are the first to go as "the targets of retrenchments." The severity of the financial crunch has reduced the scope of educational opportunity and depreciated the quality of education for many white students, but it is blacks and browns, once again, who are the most victimized by retrenchments in elementary, secondary, and higher education.

In principle, public education is an endeavor in which society pools its funds hoping to secure benefits for all. Educators and politicians often proclaim that our society attempts to provide equal educational opportunity for all regardless of "genetic structure, condition of birth, or race, creed, color, or previous condition of servitude."[6] But in practice most black Americans have neither experienced equal educational opportunity nor been the beneficiaries of a quality education. It is not by happenstance that public education mirrors the social and economic hierarchy of our society. Nor is it any accident that the racial and socioeconomic discrimination which regulates entry into education and affects the response of educational institutions is a reflection of the discrimination that separates race and class in our social hierarchy. Elementary and secondary schools covertly and overtly define what are appropriate roles in the social order for black Americans. Colleges and universities perpetuate and solidify these distinctions. For blacks, "equity and equality are now, as they have always been throughout the history of the nation, illusions."[7]

Most black and Hispanic children now live in the urban centers of the nation and attend schools which are predominantly minority.[8] The public schools in the urban centers highlight the inadequacies of public education. Urban school systems are heavily populated with students who are the most damaged victims of the ravages of an environment which fails to meet the

minimal standards of decency, humanity, and justice. The range of abilities in any school system is tremendous. Regardless of any striking similarities in physical and intellectual make-up, human development does not proceed at the same rate for all individuals within a group. Those children who are the easiest to teach and thus the least expensive to educate--based on the positive effects of environmental supports which facilitate growth and development--constitute the majority in most school systems. However, this is not true in most urban school systems. The costs are greater to educate appropriately those students whose levels of educational readiness deviate widely from the norms. The cost of providing comparability in educational programs and services is greater in some school districts.[9] Until such time as institutional racism is eradicated and its effects rectified, it will cost more to educate black students than white.[10]

There is no school district serving a large black student enrollment that is not confronted with the constraints imposed by inadequate funds. The financial prospects for urban school districts are not bery bright, and bankruptcy or near bankruptcy of big city school districts is becoming common.[11] Inflation and declining tax revenues impact most negatively on urban school systems where black students are found in the greatest numbers.[12] Most mainly black school systems have had no choice but to reconcile the imbalance between available funds and existing expenditures by reducing programs and services. The struggle for a better share of existing revenues is not being won by school districts which need to provide improved programs and services for those Americans caught in the "Other America."

The reduction of state and local funding support for urban school systems is further exacerbated by a significant decrease in federal monies. A recent opinion survey of leaders of local teachers' unions in 35 of the

nation's urban school districts revealed that union leaders believe urban systems are in far worse financial condition today as a result of the Reagan Administration than they were five years ago.[13] One urban school superintendent asserted: "The Reagan budget makes a bad situation worse."[14] The Director of Research for the American Federation of Teachers stated: "The federal education cuts fell disproportionately on city school districts because these cities have disproportionate shares of special needs children...."[15]

The retrenchments imposed on mainly or heavily black school systems over the past three years have changed the status of their level of funding support from inadequate to disastrous. Retrenchments heaped upon already hard times produce even larger class sizes in schools that deserve a compensatory approach to the allocation of resources for instruction. Curricular offerings which should be enriched and more diverse are being diluted to the detriment of innovative and individualized instruction. Without siffucient funds, a school system is unable to take full advantage of the creativity, determination, and dedication of its personnel. There comes a point when the cumulative effect of reductions over a period of time creates a very serious dislocation of basic priorities and imposes serious limitations on the ability of a system to function. The result, tragically, is that children suffer. Schools are being closed and instruction interrupted for long periods of time owing to insufficient funds or walkouts by teachers in support of their demands for higher salaries. Reductions in personnel are significantly curbing the influx both of younger teachers and black and Hispanic teachers. Some schools, because of their physical unattractiveness and/or poor state of repair, are "eyesores" even in economically depressed communities. Aesthetically and physically they are a deterrent rather than a facilitator of teaching and learning. The "gloom and doom" atmosphere generated by retrenchments

demoralizes teachers, students, and parents and decreases public confidence in schools.

In his State of the Union Message in 1969, former President Nixon declared: "in recent years the growing scope and rising costs of education have so overburdened local revenues that financial crisis has become a way of life for many school districts." A former Commissioner of Education for the State of Rhode Island was correct when he noted that "it is no longer possible, or even desirable, to distinguish analytically between the problem of educational finance and that of educational equity--that they must be viewed together and perceived as a part of the same issue, the same equation."[16] Walbert and Rasher assert that research indicates that higher levels of educational expenditures and smaller pupil teacher ratios in the schools can make a difference in achievement.[17] James Kelly notes that those who would argue that money makes no difference in education are not prepared to share the resources of the wealthy suburban districts with the less privileged urban districts.[18] Walbert and Rasher declare that the assumption that variations in education input make very little difference for test performance and equality of opportunity is scientifically and socially unsound.[19] Public education is costly, and the cost will increase in direct proportion to the number of clientele served and the scope and complexity of the problems presented to the schools.

Severe socioeconomic disparities may serve to prevent the schools from eliminating or decreasing inequality between the haves and the have nots, but the quality of schooling may have an important impact on raising overall standards of attainment. Many school districts do contribute to the cycle of deprivation and despair which entraps large numbers of blacks in environmental settings that impede rather than stimulate development to maturity.

Thus, improvements in schooling would enhance the opportunities for black students to develop their inherent potentialities. The most demanding challenge to equal educational opportunity in public education in this pluralistic democracy is the effective and equitable reconciliation of the differences in innate intellectual potentialities and the disparities in socioeconomic condition that exist between individuals and among groups. Given students of unequal supportive backgrounds and/or significant variation in readiness or abilities, true equal educational opportunity exists only when students of similar abilities and interests reach similar levels of educational attainment, regardless of the factors of socioeconomic disparities and race.

In higher education, the enrollment gains made by blacks are being eroded.[20] From 1970 to 1978, the number of black students in higher education rose from 470,000 to 915,000.[21] During this period, the gains made by blacks represented the greatest single increase in the number of black students in higher education in the history of higher education in America. Then, as is true today, more than one-third of the black students were enrolled in community colleges. Black students are not only highly concentrated in the two-year college sector, they are often in programs that will not necessarily give credits toward a baccalaureate degree.[22] But even during the period from 1970 to 1978, blacks were under-represented on most campuses, compared to their numbers in the national population.[23] A 1978 survey of 1,018 colleges and universities affiliated with the National Association of College Admission Counselors revealed that many of these institutions had no affirmative action policies related to admission practices for minority students irrespective of their stated pronouncements.[24]

Blacks represent about 13.5 percent of the college age population. (18-24) But black students represent only 9.1 percent of the Associate

degrees, 6.5 percent of the Bachelors, 6.4 percent of the Masters, and 3.9 percent of the Doctorates, and 4.1 percent of the first professional degrees in 1980.[25] The numbers and proportions of black students in higher education are the most dismal for graduate and professional education. "Black participation in graduate and professional education remains exceptionally low and in recent years the situation has actually deteriorated."[26] The number of black students in medical schools rose from 2.7 percent in 1968 to 7.5 percent in 1975. But in 1983, the percentage fell to 5.8 percent.[27] The number of black and other minorities in engineering programs rose steadily in the 1970s but declined in 1980 to the pre-1975 levels. Blacks represent only 2.1 percent of all engineering students. Blacks in 1981 constituted only 4.5 percent of law school students. About 19 percent of all black graduate students are enrolled in 34 of the historically black colleges and universities and about 22 percent of all black first professional school students are enrolled in 11 historically black colleges and universities.

White enrollment in higher education had about reached its saturation point when tuition costs escalated significantly and financial assistance to students decreased proportionately. About 28 percent of all black students in high school drop out before graduation.[28] While the dropout rate for black students is high, blacks are graduating from high school in greater percentates than ever before . About 75 percent of all white high school seniors go on to college, but only about 20 percent of black seniors do so.[29] The number of whites aged 15 to 19 will decline by 8 percent over the next decade while the number of blacks in that age range will increase by 9 percent. The attrition rate for those black students who do enter higher education is a major concern. About 12 percent of the black students who enter higher education complete college and only 4 percent go on to complete graduate school.[30]

In both instances these percentages are about half those for white students, 23 and 8 percent respectively. The uncertainty of federal financial-aid programs, the raising of admission standards, inferior education in the high schools, reductions in remedial and support services, and the poor state of the economy combine to produce a high attrition rate for black students and to force an even greater percentage of black high school graduates not to opt for college.

Christopher F. Edley, Executive Director of the United Negro College Fund, asserts that this is not the time to roll back progress and slam the door in the face of thousands of young blacks.[31] He states:[32]

> Now just when it seems we have had a breakthrough, the rules have been changed. A decrease in financial aid to low-income students along with a decline in open-enrollment in New York City and cutbacks in the recruitment of minority students by predominantly white schools all say that the education of the poor and disadvantaged is a low priority and that in an economic crunch they will be the first to go and the last admitted.

The past and present contributions of black colleges and universities stand as a monumental achievement in the epic struggle of black Americans to secure the kind of life treatment that establishes, perpetuates, and protects dignity and freedom. Few of the mainly white institutions of higher education do as much for their students as do black colleges and universities. Black institutions in higher education set the standard for integrating quality with equality and for combining excellence with care. Stephen J. Wright noted that it is the black colleges and universities that assume the "formidable task of educating 'high risk' black students--those not being recruited vigorously on any appreciable scale by predominantly white institutions."[33] Black

educators in black colleges and universities championed the belief that being different did not mean that one was inferior. One shudders to think of what life in America would be like today for black Americans without the benefits derived from the sensitivity, persistence, courage, and expertise of black educators in black institutions.

The 105 historically black colleges and universities have since their inception struggled for survival and recognition in a society that did little to enhance their existence. Some of these black institutions are among the best in higher education; most are on par with historically white institutions with similar budgets and student populations from comparable socioeconomic circumstances. Black colleges and universities have provided remedial services to both middle range and severely disadvantaged students who have the intellectual potential but who must overcome the impact of discrimination and low-quality public education.[34]

Most black students in higher education are enrolled in mainly white institutions. Black colleges and universities enroll about 30 percent of all the black students in higher education but graduate about 50 percent of the black students who receive undergraduate degrees.[35] The proportion of black students in higher education enrolled in black institutions went down from 58 percent in 1970 to 40 percent in 1973. Enrollments at the 42 private black colleges which are affiliated with the United Negro College Fund suffered a 12 percent drop in the size of their freshmen classes in 1982.[36] Total enrollment in these colleges are experiencing decreased enrollments but many are managing to maintain their enrollments. Because of both the financial situation and changes related to desegregation, the black private colleges are facing sharper competition from the traditionally black public colleges which have managed to avoid enrollment declines in the past few years.[37]

The lack of money is the major reason why large numbers of black students "are changing their minds and not enrolling" in historically black or mainly white colleges. The always underfinanced black colleges and universities must now scramble for an even smaller piece of a shrinking base of funding support for higher education. Some black colleges may not survive the financial crunch, and additional black colleges like West Virginia State may fall victim to the reluctance of state legislatures to finance colleges and universities with the specific mission to serve a mainly black student population.

In higher education, the quest of blacks for equal educational opportunity is also impeded by socioeconomic inequities and the absence of adequate provision for compensatory assistance. The higher education experience is demanding, rewarding, and expensive. The social, economic, and academic challenges which students encounter in their pursuits of a college degree are consequential even for students who are well prepared in high school for the rigors of academic. The challenges are often herculean, and under certain circumstances, insurmountable for students who enter college with serious deficiencies in their prior education and levels of academic and social maturity. "Equal access in higher education should mean more than enormous attrition rates and the lowest rung on the hierarchy of the educational ladder."[38] To be a viable concept for blacks and other disadvantaged minorities, equal educational opportunity in higher education must be undergirded by support services that provide minority students with the compensatory and financial assistance necessary to prevent their falling victim to the revolving door dundrome. Blacks know the folly of the runner who is kept at the starting line until the competitors are halfway to the finish line and then is told to "run like Hell." Equity in admission to higher education for many black students would require a "system in which a high school graduate is not prevented by his past performance, his financial situation or other sociceconomic factors from receiving the

education he wants."[39] The "sink or swim" attitude toward students in higher education is indefensible when applied to students of high potential from highly supportive socioeconomic backgrounds. Such a practice is inhumane and unjust when practiced on those who carry the academic and psychological scars of societal neglect and indifference.

The increased representation or the decrease in the under-representation of blacks and other disadvantaged minorities in mainly white colleges and universities has focused considerable attention on the question: "Will too many unprepared and underprepared students kill quality and standards in higher education?" This question surfaced to the forefront following the adoption of open admissions policies by certain institutions, particularly the City University of New York. The question is not new, only the particular groups--blacks and browns--who are the subjects of concern. Higher education would be devoid of meaning if it did not connote standards for admissions and program completion which justify the financial support provided and the public deference accorded to faculties in and graduates of colleges and universities.

Timothy S. Healy, President of Georgetown University and former Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs of the City University of New York, has had extensive involvement with open admissions. Healy believes "standards ought to refer to what a university does for its students, rather than to their opening handicap."[40] The Carnegie Council on Policy Studies in Higher Education declared that no higher education institution should knowingly admit or confer degrees upon persons they believe are incompetent.[41] But the Council was equally emphatic in declaring that colleges and universities should make every possible effort to admit and to graduate persons who will meet the diversified needs of a heterogeneous, pluralistic nation.

The Council noted that grades and test scores are sufficiently predictive to be useful in selective admissions, but that test scores are insufficient

for determining the admission of a great number of persons who are found between the extremes of those who test either very high or very low.[42] Tests tend to reveal what students do not know and not what they can learn. Tests also provide dramatic documentation of the negative consequences of discrimination and deprivation. It is reprehensible to require college applicants who are clearly victims of institutionalized depressive environmental conditions to compete as equals for the limited number of approved admissions to a college or university. President Healy states: "The best way of determining whether a potential student is capable of doing college work is to admit him to college and evaluate his performance there."[43] I support the premise that "the quality of the educational process is determined by what happens to the student after he enrolls, not by what he lacks when he first matriculates."[44]

Harold Howe observes that some Americans bemoan what they perceive as a decline in standards in higher education and are nostalgic for the "good old days" when a relatively small proportion of Americans went to college.[45] But Howe notes that since World War II, America has built a diverse system of postsecondary education that has no equal in the world. Most certainly, higher education will never be what is used to be when its clientele was overwhelmingly comprised of an elitist collection from the favored religious, racial, and ethnic groups. For that change, gratitude rather than remorse is the appropriate sentiment. Today, most of the entering black freshmen represent previously untapped resources for America: "poor and needy kids who are the first in their families to go to college and break the cycle of poverty that has chained them."[46] Whatever has been lost in opting not to provide the very best for a special few has been more than adequately recovered by seeking to do a good job for a larger and more widely heterogeneous representation of the American population. Yet, the American system of education is still stratified in the sense that its upper reaches are underoccupied by persons from poor and minority backgrounds.[47] Equity in higher education

would require translating the increases in black high school graduates into greater numbers of successful black recipients of undergraduate and graduate degrees.

Judge A. Leon Higginbotham has noted that the Constitution's references to justice were mocked by the treatment meted out daily to black Americans by all three branches of our government.[48] For most of the period from 1619 to the present, the courts joined the executive and legislative branches of the government at local, state, and national levels in the denial of basic rights to black Americans.[49] The "doctrine of separate but equal" in the era of de jure racially segregated public education gave legal sanction to the establishment of educational institutions that were most certainly separate but decidely unequal. But in 1954, the U.S. Supreme Court in Brown v. Board of Education declared that education where the state had undertaken to provide it was a right that must be available to all on equal terms.[50] A state can limit the amount of money that it will spend on education, but a state cannot accomplish such a purpose by invivious distinctions between classes of its citizens.[51] The right of blacks and other disadvantaged minorities to equal educational opportunity is not dependent on group consensus and does not stop at the borders of any state.

But the U.S. Supreme Court in 1973, by a 5 to 4 vote in Rodriguez, rejected the premise that the equal protection clause of the Constitution prohibited states from inequitably distributing expenditures for public education and also rejected the premise that education was a "fundamental right" entitled to constitutional protection.[52] The high court asserted that the key to deciding whether education is a "fundamental right" is not found in the societal importance of education but in assessing whether there is a right to education explicitly or implicitly guaranteed in the Constitution.[53] Thus, the Rodriguez decision makes it difficult to raise the federal equal protection clause in behalf of educationally or economically disadvantaged children who

require compensatory resources in order to compete on an equal basis with children from middle-income families. The high court requires that there be a showing of deliberate discriminatory intent or absolute deprivation of education in order for the federal courts to mandate any restructuring of how funds are allocated to a particular school or school system.

In its role as the arbiter of school desegregation compliance litigation, the U.S. Supreme Court has promoted the most significant advancements of the principle of equal educational opportunity. The high court has moved from the mere destruction of barriers in the assignment of black students to the mandating of ancillary relief. Ancillary relief in school desegregation cases is "usually ordered when equity in outcome is judged absent and only possible if education components are made part of the overall remedy."[54]

In the Detroit school desegregation case, the U.S. Supreme Court in Milliken I in 1974 emphasized the remedial nature of its responsibility by expanding the charge to include such action as would nearly as possible restore the victims of discriminatory conduct to the position that they would have enjoyed in the absence of such conduct.[55] Later in 1977, the high court in Milliken II approved remediation in the form of educational components designed to restore the victims of discriminatory conduct to the position that they would have enjoyed in terms of education.[56] In Milliken II, the U.S. Supreme Court approved the District Court's mandate of compensatory education programs, inservice training, and guidance and counseling programs as a part of the desegregation plan. U.S. District Court Judge Robert E. DeMascio ordered the State Board of Education of Michigan and the Detroit Board of Education to implement 11 educational components as a means of eradicating the effects of past discrimination.[57] The state was required to fund 50 percent of all additional costs. A school official estimates that about 100 million dollars

in additional funding has been directed to the implementation of court mandated educational components and support services.

The evidence is clear that the concentration of urban poverty in the nation's largest cities results in a high proportion of black and other disadvantaged children suffering from impaired mental, emotional, and physical health, English-language difficulties, impaired learning readiness, etc. If schools are ever to compensate for the restricting factors of socioeconomic deprivation and rectify the effects of cumulative deficiencies in basic skills in reading and mathematics, there must be more than an equal allocation of funds for instruction and support services. But many mainly black school systems are funded at levels below that provided to mainly white systems.[58] Compensatory programs and services need to be made non-negotiable elements of equal educational opportunity. But the principle of equal educational opportunity ought not be construed to mean sameness of programs and per pupil expenditures, or the same number of tax dollars to be paid by each tax payer. Unless equity is built into equalization efforts, equalization formulas are not only inequitable but detrimental. The priorities in terms of programs and services should be directed to the alleviation of situations where socioeconomic factors and academic deficiencies combine to present the most urgent challenges to the credibility of public education in a pluralistic democracy.

Equal access alone is not the "necessary and sufficient condition of equal opportunity."[59] Black Americans should pursue the "doctrine of debt" principle in public education just as vociferously as it is being sought in other institutional settings. The "doctrine of debt" principle holds that America owes something of value to black Americans for 250 years of slavery and for more than 100 years of discrimination following slavery. The scope and severity of the educational needs of black students have for years

indicated that some specialized treatment of a positive nature should be accorded to black students after centuries during which blacks were the recipients of demeaning and delimiting treatment. Such recompense is required if past and present inequities and injustices are to be rectified rather than compounded and perpetuated. The peculiarities of the educational needs of black students literally cry out for financial resources above those which are allocated for the mass of students.

The impact of the current cycle of retrenchments in public education on the provision of equal educational opportunity for black and other disadvantaged Americans reminds me of the comment attributed to the late Will Rogers. Rogers is alledged to have stated: "The depression wasn't so bad, but it came in the middle of hard-times." In general, the majority of white Americans, particularly middle-class whites, have been well served by public education. But the facts reveal that blacks and other minorities from depressed and deprived socioeconomic circumstances have not been well received by public education. The nation has not reached the goal of equal educational opportunity; thus, retrenchments cannot destroy that which never existed. But retrenchments have eroded the gains that were achieved and have been used as justification for de-emphasizing the need for compensatory treatment for those groups who have not shared sufficiently in the progress and achievement of public education over the past thirty years.

Blacks and Hispanics constitute a very large but politically underorganized representation of the American population. The very inevitability of conflicting demands and wants in public education make it imperative that blacks and Hispanics marshall their very considerable potential for exerting influence in the political arena. Education cannot be separated from politics. Most groups have interests to advance and protect. Politics is the process through which organized power is applied in a democracy. The play of group

against group is the process of modern democracy. Blacks and Hispanics cannot depend primarily on the rightness of their cause or the goodwill of others in their quests for equal educational opportunity. Blacks and other have nots must build a power base sufficient to require decision-makers to negotiate in reference to their demands for equal educational opportunity. Participatory democracy reveals its most positive and negative aspects in the politics of education. Blacks and Hispanics have the numbers needed to make effective use of "ballot power." Politicians will respond to the demands of blacks and Hispanics when they are convinced that the political power of blacks and Hispanics is mobilized and unwilling to compromise on their demands for equal educational opportunity and quality education. The "oral" majority in America needs to be integrated.

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